"A Fair Enquiry into Truth": A Freethinker's Translation of Ciceronian Theology in Enlightenment England

In 1741, in the dying days of Robert Walpole's dominance of English politics, an anonymous vernacular translation of Cicero's theological dialogue *De Natura Deorum* was printed in London, by Richard Francklin of Covent Garden.[1] A single octavo volume of just under three hundred pages, it was printed without the Latin text, but was equipped with a brief preface, critical notes, and an appended essay on astronomy and anatomy. The text translated therein depicts a conversation between representatives of three ancient philosophical schools – Velleius the Epicurean, Balbus the Stoic, and Cotta the Academic – during which each participant champions their school's stance on the nature of the divine. The Translator, as has been demonstrated in previous scholarship, approached the text as a Freethinker, reflecting an intellectual tradition which had utilised *De Natura Deorum* extensively, specifically the Academic arguments of Cotta, in support of their rationalising philosophy.[2] Yet in contrast to their Freethinking predecessors, the Translator interrogates, critiques, and challenges the assertions made by all of Cicero's interlocutors, including Cotta. It will be argued here that rather than representing a consolidation of the existing Freethinking attitudes to this Ciceronian text, this translation sought to challenge that reading, as

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[1] *M. Tullius Cicero, Of the Nature of the Gods; in three books. With critical, philosophical, and explanatory notes. To which is added, An enquiry into the astronomy and anatomy of the antients* (London: Richard Francklin, 1741); it was a popular version, with new editions in 1775 and 1829, and numerous reprints. On the printer Francklin, who courted controversy in the 1720s and 1730s by printing texts critical of Walpole, see James J. Caudle, "Richard Francklin: a controversial publisher, bookseller and printer, 1718-1765," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Vol. V, 1695-1830*, eds. M. F. Suarez and M. L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 383-396.

[2] See Giovanni Tarantino, "Collins's Cicero, Freethinker," in *Atheism and Deism Revalued: heterodox religious identities in Britain, 1650-1800*, eds Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci and Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 81-100; David Berman, "Hume and Collins on Miracles," *Hume Studies* 6.2 (1980), pp. 150-154.

the evolution of the discourse in the 1720s and 1730s had rendered the existing Freethinking interpretation of the work problematic.

How could such a reinterpretation of an established text be achieved? Translation was an ideal vehicle attempting to reform the way a text was understood. Early modern translators did not prioritise accurate, word-for-word recreations of the ancient texts; rather, translation was an interpretative exercise, through which the meaning and value of the original text could be adapted or recast to suit the receiving culture or the translator's intellectual aims.[3] The increasing recognition of this in scholarship has enabled a greater appreciation of the significance of translations not only as galvanising forces in cultural transformations, but as texts of importance in their own right, worthy of close scholarly attention.[4] Translations of classical texts across the early modern period have been shown to engage with contemporary cultural, intellectual, and political concerns, utilising the format as something between scholarship and discourse, facilitating a shift in how ideas were conceived.[5] It is, therefore, only by examining how the Translator of *De*

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[3] Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, eds P. Burke and R. P. Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 7-38, provides a very useful survey of the evolution of scholarship on early modern translation. See also Lise Andriès et al., "Introduction," in *Intellectual Journeys: the translation of ideas in Enlightenment England, France and Ireland*, eds Lise Andriès et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), pp. 1-13 (7-9) on the use of translation to pursue 'cultural transfer'; Samuel Baudry, "Imitation and Translation: the debate in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland," in *Intellectual Journeys: the translation of ideas in Enlightenment England, France and Ireland*, eds Lise Andriès et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), pp. 17-34, on the diversity of activities which constitute 'translation'.

[4] On the efforts to recover translation on the basis that it was not translation as understood in modernity, see Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: towards a new literary history* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 1-19. See also David Hopkins, "Colonization, Closure or Creative Dialogue?: the case of Pope's *Iliad*," in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, eds L. Hardwick and C. Stray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 129-140.

[5] See, for example, Norman Austin, "Translation as Baptism: Dryden's Lucretius," *Arion* 7.4 (1968), pp. 576-602, on Dryden's adaptation of Lucretius from heresy to orthodoxy; Sheldon Brammall, S., *The English Aeneid: Translations of Virgil, 1555-1646* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 2-8, on the integration of nationally specific elements; and Jack Lynch, J., "Political Ideology in Translations of the Iliad, 1660-1715," *Translation and Literature* 7.1 (1998), pp. 23-41, on Restoration celebrations of monarchical authority.

Natura Deorum in 1741 approached their scholarly task, constructing the edition and the text, that a full understanding of their aims can be achieved. Excerpts of the commentary considered in isolation will not convey the Translator's careful construction of their authority as an interpreter of the text, the relationship they pursued with the reader, and how all the elements of the translation came together to accomplish a transformation of the text. By examining both the scholarly pursuit of the translation and its efforts to impact the broader discourse, this discussion will further illustrate the fundamental necessity of integrating the transmission of the classical text into discussions of their reception, as it was in the course of their transmission that significant moments of interpretation and transformation took place.

Translating Cicero in 1741

First, a sense of the undertaking faced by the Translator must be established. There was a steady production of English translations of Cicero's philosophical works from the mid-sixteenth-century onwards, but this was with a notable emphasis on the ethical tracts. Most popular were those texts which related to political ethics, with six translations of *De Officiis* by 1755, and nine of *De Amicitia* by 1777. Since the mid-seventeenth-century translators had also tended away from the grammatical translations advertised in the preceding century, most notably the translations of *De Officiis* by Nicholas Grimalde in 1556 and John Brinsley in 1616. The translations which appeared in the decades prior to 1741 followed a pattern reflected in the translation of *De Natura Deorum*: produced without the Latin, but with accompanying prefaces, commentaries, and occasionally essays.

The enthusiasm with which Cicero's philosophical works were translated into English in the later seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century can be neatly explained by one of those translators, the Oxford clergyman Samuel Parker (1681-1730). In the preface to his 1702 translation of Cicero's *De Finibus*, the first in English, Parker reflected on the status of Cicero's philosophical corpus in English:

> *I know some Parts of his Philosophy have within these few Years appear'd in English. An Attempt (as it happens, an unkind one) has been made upon his* Tusculan Questions*, and his Books* of the Nature of the Deities. *The* British Cicero *alone has copy'd the Roman to the Life, in his admirable and envy'd* Translation of the Offices. *'Tis true,* these Three*, with that which follows, are the* Substance *of his* Ethicks; *but what other profitable Precepts and Suggestions are to be collected from the* Remainder*, I believe, might do some Service among us recommended in our own Tongue, especially in an Age when People rave after* Experiments*, and like the Generality of Madmen, will not be brought to their Wits* but in their own Way.[6]

Manifested here is the desire to make these works accessible to those unable to engage with their original form, and consequently to make more widely available the wisdom contained therein. The potential benefit to the community was such that it was worth any concerns that "Translations *make us* Idle, *and* Forgetful *of the* Originals," arguing that "Rather *they should seem to put us in mind of them*."[7]

It is, therefore, notable that in spite of this evident enthusiasm for producing translations of Cicero's philosophical corpus, there was only one English translation of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* in circulation before 1741. This was another anonymous effort, which had been printed in 1683 by Joseph Hindmarsh; it was a version of the text made fairly impenetrable by extensive interpretation and commentary surrounding Cicero's words, with a prefatory discussion which ran to around a hundred and forty pages, across which the contents of the dialogue were commented

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[6] Samuel Parker (trans.), *Tully's Five Books De Finibus; or, concerning the last object of desire and aversion* (London, 1702), A6^{r}. The texts referred to are the translation of *Tusculan Disputations* by Christopher Wase in 1683, and Thomas Cockman's translation of *De Officiis* in 1699.

[7] Parker, *De Finibus*, A4^{r}.

on in minute detail.[8] In spite of the problematic format of this version, and the lack of success indicated by the absence of reprints, it took almost sixty years for another translation of *De Natura Deorum* to be produced. This is in marked contrast to the fate of the dialogue in French; by 1721 there were four translations of *De Natura Deorum* in circulation, together with a translation of *De Divinatione*, a work which would not be available in English until the nineteenth century.[9] The contrast in the two vernacular traditions did not go unremarked. An article in the learned journal *Memoirs of Literature*, discussing the translation of *De Divinatione* by Régnier-Desmarais in 1710, commented that "'Tis no small Advantage to the Ingenious, who are not skill'd in the Learned Languages, to have the most excellent Works of the Ancients translated by able hands," and noted that Régnier-Desmarais "has lately procured this Advantage to the Publick by his *French* Translation of *Cicero*'s Books *de Divinatione*, which no less deserved to be translated into our Language, than many other Pieces of the same Author, that have appear'd in a *French* dress."[10]

Why then the hesitation over *De Natura Deorum*? Evidently the value of translating Cicero's philosophy to make the ideas and principles contained therein more accessible was recognised, yet it was those very ideas which rendered *De Natura Deorum* a more challenging prospect. The 1741 Translator was confronting a text which had been the subject of intense debate for decades, and

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[8] Anon. (trans.), *Cicero's three books touching the nature of the gods: done into English; with notes, and illustrations. Setting forth, (from all antiquity,) what perceptions, man, by the only light of reason, may entertein, concerning a deity!* (London: Joseph Hindmarsh, 1683).

[9] Guy le Fevre de la Broderie (trans.), *De la nature des dieux de Marc. Tull. Cicéron* (Paris: Abel l'Angelier, 1581); Pierre du Ryer (trans.), *Les Oeuvres de Ciceron* (Paris, 1670); L'Abbé Masson (trans.), *Ciceron de la Nature des Dieux. Latin et François, avec des Remarques critiques et historiques* (Paris: Jambert, 1721); P. J. Thoulier d'Olivet (trans.), *Entretiens de Ciceron sur la Nature des Dieux* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1721), with comments and emendations by Jean Bouhier. The first English translation of *De Divinatione* was that by Charles Duke Yonge in 1853.

[10] *Memoirs of Literature: containing a weekly account of the state of learning, both at home and abroad* (London: Anne Baldwin, 1712-1714), 1.12, commenting on L'Abbé Régnier-Desmarais (trans.), *Les Deux Livres de la Divination de Cicéron* (Paris: Gregoire Dupuis, 1710).

whose contents could be perceived as dangerous to the broader community if translated without due care for the receiving culture.

The Debate: Orthodox or Heterodox?

Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* is a text which, by virtue of its dialogue form and obscure authorial voice, has consistently provoked debate across its history.[11] The use of historical characters to articulate the principal arguments has made it impossible to say with any certainty where in the dialogue it might be possible to locate Cicero's 'true' voice: while on the one hand, Cicero appears under his own name at the conclusion of the dialogue to judge that the Stoic case was the most persuasive, on the other hand in his own life Cicero followed the Academic School, as represented by Cotta's character. This ambiguity created space for debates over how the text should be read, debates made all the more intense in the early Enlightenment by the vigorous discourse at work debating the relative merits of a natural and a revelatory religion, positions which could be associated with Cotta and Balbus respectively.

This is well illustrated by the French translations of this text; approaching it from a Catholic perspective, these scholars employed the tools made available by the medium of translation to adapt the text, emphasising the aspects of Stoic theism and physics which were more palatable to their contemporaries, and diminishing Cotta's sceptical contribution.[12] Describing the Academic interlocutor, d'Olivet wrote "qui ne veut le rendre qu'à l'évidence, les attaque tour à tour, leur montre l'illusion de leurs préjugez, & ne songe à se garantir lui-même d'erreur, que par ne rien affirmer de positif."[13] In their translations, both Le Masson and d'Olivet took measures to ensure

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[11] This debate continues; for a summary see Malcolm Schofield, "Ciceronian Dialogue," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 63-84.

[12] Alan C. Kors, *Atheism in France: 1650-1729* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 209-217.

[13] d'Olivet (trans.), *Entretiens de Ciceron sur la Nature des Dieux*, pp. 9-10.

that the more dangerous – to their minds – portions of the text were identified and their potential threat limited, employing the commentary and appended essays to this end. A similar concern is apparent in the English translation from 1683, in which there is a clear bias towards the arguments for Stoic theism present in the text. Through the extensive interpretative paraphernalia, the translator showed a propensity for digressions regarding the wisdom of Stoic theism, and for articulating distaste for the sceptical rejection of divine providence in the third book. Indeed, when summarising the dialogue, Balbus' argument is praised for its "Dignity, Gravity, Elegance; the Manifold, even Infinite Learning of it; and the Religious, almost Christian Theology of the Stoiques, can no Words be Equal."[14]

In contrast, there was much in the dialogue to recommend it to more heterodox readers, notably Cotta's critique of the Stoic argument through the application of rational arguments against the possibility of divine providence. This ensured its prominence in the Freethinking tradition predominantly championed in the writings of John Toland, Anthony Collins, and Matthew Tindal, not only in their writings but in their pursuit of scholarship.[15] In 1712, the radical freethinker John Toland (1670-1722) had outlined his plans for a new edition of Cicero's complete works in *Cicero*

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[14] Anon. (trans.), *Cicero's three books*, p. iii.

[15] On the presence of *De Natura Deorum* and *De Divinatione* in the Freethinking tradition see Katherine A. East, 'How to Read Ciceronian Scepticism: Anthony Collins, Richard Bentley, and the Freethought Debate in 1713,' in *The Afterlife of Cicero*, ed. Gesine Manuwald (London, BICS, 2017), pp. 162-176; Tarantino, "Collins's Cicero," pp. 94-99; Günther Gawlick, "Cicero and the Enlightenment," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 25 (1963), pp. 657-682. On the identity of Collins, Toland and Tindal as Freethinkers, see Katherine A. East, *The Radicalization of Cicero: John Toland and Strategic Editing in the Early Enlightenment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 195-224 on John Toland; Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976), pp. 200-210; Diego Lucci, "Deism, Freethinking and Toleration in Enlightenment England," *History of European Ideas* 43.4 (2017), pp. 345-358 (345-347); Frederick C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: the defense of rationality in the early English Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 257-258; Stephen Lalor, *Matthew Tindal, Freethinker: an eighteenth-century assult on religion* (London: Continuum, 2006).

Illustratus.[16] In the course of explaining his plans, he described the synopses with which he would preface the more controversial or difficult works, including *De Natura Deorum*. This dialogue, he explained, provoked confusion regarding Cicero's true voice within the text, confusion which could be easily rectified once the reader was instructed that Cicero's voice should be identified with that of Cotta, the Academic speaker.[17] This would of course promote the sceptical portion of the text, with its critique of Stoic theism, by endorsing it with the authority of Cicero himself. It was a reading echoed by that foremost Freethinker Anthony Collins (1676-1729), who in 1713 used his *Discourse of Free-Thinking* to claim Cicero for the Freethinkers by arguing that since he was affiliated with the school of Academic Scepticism, his voice must be identified with the Academic character in each of these dialogues.[18] Orthodox critics responding to Collins' *Discourse* condemned this recasting of Cicero as a model Freethinker.[19] Their concern was most succinctly articulated by the clergyman Francis Hare (1671-1740), who when critiquing Collins commented that "we are in danger of losing no less than an Edition of all *Tully*, and what is of more Consequence, a *new Gospel:* with both which, for the Advancement of Learning and Religion, *their* Learning and *their* Religion, the *Free-Thinking* Club were preparing to oblige the World."[20]

These fears of a freethinking edition of Cicero came closest to realisation at the hands of Anthony Collins himself, who several times across the 1720s advertised his plans to translate both

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[16] John Toland, *Cicero Illustratus, Dissertatio Philologico-Critica: sive, consiliam de toto edendo Cicerone, alia plane methodo quam hactenus unquam factum* (London: John Humfreys, 1712).

[17] Toland, *Cicero Illustratus*, pp. 36-38.; see East, *The Radicalization of Cicero*, pp. 195-224.

[18] Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, Occasion'd by the Rise and Growth of a Sect call'd Free-Thinkers* (London, 1713), p. 139.

[19] See, for example, Richard Bentley, *Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking, part the second* (London: John Morphew, 1713), pp. 68-82.

[20] Francis Hare, *The Clergyman's Thanks to Phileleutherus, for his remarks on the late Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London: A. Baldwin, 1713), p. 47.

De Natura Deorum and *De Divinatione*, filling this apparent gap in the Ciceronian philosophical corpus. A letter to Pierre Des Maizeaux, written on 21st September 1721, announced this intention, beginning that Collins was "very glad to find, that they translate in France Cicero's books *De natura Deorum*, and that two translations of them come out at the same time," before proceeding to confirm the fears of his critics that such a text would be used to attack the Church: "Nothing can more tend to promote good sense in the world than some of his Philosophical works; which are applicable to all sorts of folly and superstition by those who have *eyes to see* and *ears to hear*; and which must have a good effect on many from the establish'd credit and authority of the Author."[21] These translations were advertised to Collins' readers first in his *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England*, coincidentally published in 1724 by Richard Francklin, which the notice that "*Speedily will be published*, CICERO'S Treatises of the *Nature* of the *Gods* and of *Divination*. Translated into *english*, with annotations. In two volumes," then subsequently in his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* in 1727.[22] Collins evidently planned versions of these texts which would challenge the perspective of those who elevated its Stoic content while attacking its sceptical elements.

Considered in this context, the motivation for promoting Freethought in a translation of *De Natura Deorum* becomes more apparent: the sole existing translations of the text all took measures to augment the dialogue's Stoic arguments for divine providence, thereby strengthening its viability as a tool for the orthodox. Since at least 1712 the need for a version of the text to counter this interpretation had been acknowledged and planned; in 1741, such a version appeared,

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[21] James Dybikowski (ed.), *The Correspondence of Anthony Collins (1676-1729), Freethinker* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011), pp. 328-329.

[22] Anthony Collins, *An Historical and Critical Essay, On the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: Richard Francklin, 1724), p. 279; Collins, *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* (London: T. J., 1727), p. 439.

if not in quite the form anticipated by Toland and Collins.[23] The freethinking sympathies of the 1741 translation have been emphasised in existing scholarship, with the studies provided by David Berman, and more recently Giovanni Tarantino, exploring the possibility that the translation was in fact that promised by Anthony Collins himself.[24] This is an identification that will have further doubt cast upon it here, as this translation, while clearly written to endorse Freethinking principles, pursued a very different reading of the text itself from Collins. Nonetheless, faced with the intense debate concerning *De Natura Deorum*, how did the Translator use the translation format to facilitate their reinterpretation of the text?

The Translator in the Text

From the outset, the Translator makes their aims clear in a brief preface, extending to only two pages, yet those pages are used to make explicit statements of method, attitude to the text, and intended outcome for the reader.[25] After a summation of the content and format of the text, the Translator assessed the value of the dialogue, concluding that despite the flaws of the views expressed therein, there was much of value in the way of historical knowledge and theological understanding:

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[23] It is worth noting that Conyers Middleton, *The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero* (London: Edward Moxon, 1741) was also published in this year; the absence of internal references to Middleton's *History* suggests that it had not appeared by the time this translation was printed.

[24] See Tarantino, "Collins's Cicero," pp. 81-100, and Berman, "Hume and Collins on Miracles," pp. 150-154. This was an identification suggested by Berman, but which Tarantino has effectively disproved with a comparison of the translated text with portions of translation present elsewhere in Collins' works. For reasons that will become apparent across the course of this discussion, I agree with Tarantino that Collins is an unlikely candidate for the identity of the Translator, but primarily because there are notable divergences between Collins' reading of *De Natura Deorum*, and that in evidence here. The other candidate was Richard Francklin's son Thomas, named on the title-page of the 1775 edition; this is an unlikely attribution, as he was both a clergyman and only twenty years' old at the time of publication.

[25] See Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 55-57 on the opportunities presented by the preface for a direct address to the reader.

> The Dispute is carried on with a Mixture of Gravity and Railery; and tho' all the Arguments on either Side will not bear the Test of unprejudiced Reason, yet some of them are strong and persuasive; and even those Passages, (and some such there are) which are almost ridiculously weak, are not without their Advantages to the Reader; for the Knowledge of many antient *Roman* Customs, of great Part of the Theology and Mythology of the Antients, and many curious Pieces of History, are handed down to us, tho' introduced with a superstitious Regard to the Traditions and religious Rites and Ceremonies of their Ancestors.[26]

What swiftly becomes apparent is the Translator's concern that the reader should assess the dialogue's content in a rational manner, applying the "Test of unprejudiced Reason" so that the strength and weakness of the arguments presented can be judged, and the "superstitious Regard" in evidence not be permitted to mislead. This intention - which coheres closely with the approach to acquiring knowledge championed by the Freethinkers, - is confirmed when the Translator uses the preface to pledge that "One Design of my Notes is to guard the Mind against Superstition, and to prepare it for a fair Enquiry into Truth without any partial Attachment to Principles founded only on Education and Custom."[27] This is the crucial point: the purpose of the translation is instructive. The Translator intends to interpose themselves into the commentary so as to act as a guide to the reader, demonstrating the appropriate way to apply rational criticism to the text.

As this indicates, the text itself will not be the location of this pedagogical intervention, a point confirmed in the preface by the Translator's description of their method:

> I have endeavour'd, in my Translation, to preserve Tully's Manner of writing, not departing from it even in that Particular, which has been imputed to him by some as a Fault, the

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[26] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, A^{r}.

[27] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, A^{v}.

> Prolixity of his Periods; for there is generally such a pressing Occasion for that Prolixity that the Connection of the Argument would be broke without it; and to depart from it would be to depart from Cicero's Manner of writing.[28]

For the most part, the 1741 translation reflects these aims, providing a translation more literal than literary. There are some notable exceptions, particularly related to how specific vocabulary was translated, with certain occasions presenting an opportunity for the Translator to introduce terminology evocative of his reader's contemporary environment, limiting the distance between the reader and the text which might otherwise be created.[29] The word *haruspex*, for example; rather than leaving the word in the text printed in italics, or attempting a translation which would reflect its specific meaning, such as 'soothsayer' or 'Etruscan diviner', the Translator instead translates *haruspex* as "priest."[30] This is a decision which seems to universalise a specific position and practice within Roman religion, and to attempt a less than subtle association between the superstitious practices of the *haruspices* and contemporary priests, an attempt only confirmed by the comment in the note to that translation reading that "when we consider the Fopperies, and Impostures of Romish Priests, this Translation [of *haruspex*] may very well be indulged." The translation of *haruspex* in this manner is all the more notable when it is considered that Bentley lambasted Collins in 1713 for translating *haruspex* in this way, as priest rather than as a specific priesthood: "What? Haruspex a Priest in general? And one of our, that is, the Roman Priests?...Surely there must be

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[28] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, A^{v}.

[29] See Burke, "Cultures of Translation," pp. 25-26, on the distance created by the 'foreignization' of vocabulary. The manipulation of vocabulary is explored by Andrea Catanzaro, "From Many Kings to a Single One: Hobbesian Absolutism Disguised as an Epic Translation," *History of Political Thought* 37.4 (2016), pp. 658-685, and Line Cottegnies, "Michel de Morolles's 1650 French Translation of Lucretius and its Reception in England," in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, eds Norbrook, D. et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 161-190 (183-186).

[30] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 44, commenting on *DND*.1.71. See also p. 67, commenting on the translation of *deus* at *DND*.1.106.

some Mistake: and we shall find it lies no where else, but in our Writer's empty noddle."[31] A *haruspex* was a foreign priesthood, introduced into Rome, and to conflate the two was ridiculed by Bentley as both ignorance and a deliberate attempt to construct Cicero into an anticlerical figure.

Rather than the translation itself being used to direct the reader of *De Natura Deorum*, it was the commentary accompanying the text, described as "critical, philosophical, and explanatory NOTES" on the frontispiece, which would facilitate the Translator's intervention. Throughout these notes, the Translator's voice is a strong presence, directly guiding the reader as they make their way through the text. In addition to the expected explanations of difficult terminology, and the provision of historical explication, the editorial voice intruded in the commentary in two primary ways providing, first, the Translator's judgement on various problematic variants, and second, the Translator's critique of arguments and evidence provided by the dialogue's interlocutors. As shown by the preface, the purpose of these interventions by the Translator is pedagogical; their aim is to educate the reader in how to apply all available knowledge to the critical evaluation of knowledge claims, particularly in relation to religious truth.[32] The rest of this section will examine how the Translator engages with the textual variants, using the opportunity provided to advance their own scholarly authority, before the remaining sections of the discussion examine the interpretative interventions in the commentary, and hence the use to which that authority is put.

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[31] Bentley, *Remarks*, 2.64.

[32] This evokes the pedagogical commentary discussed by Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: the traditions of scholarship in an age of science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 23-46, an approach which emphasised the continuing relevance of the text to the reader, rather than its historical distance. See also Glenn W. Most, "Preface," in *Commentaries: Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprechtm, 1999), pp. vii-xv, on the function of a pedagogical commentary to empower the reader's own judgement over the text, a clear aim of the Translator; cf. Ineke Sluiter's essay in the same volume, "Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition," pp. 173-205.

The Translator's intent to engage with the transmission of the original text is again indicated in the preface, where the Translator claims to "have consulted all the various Readings, and chose those, which seem'd most rational to me."[33] Examining the variants identified and discussed in the notes, two points become clear: first, the Translator is determined to advertise engagement with the editorial history of the text, and consequently their scholarly engagement, by drawing on editions dating from the early sixteenth-century through to the most recent recension in order to discuss particular variants; and second, in assessing the variants, the Translator is well-disposed to welcome conjectural emendations modifying the vulgate, even when those conjectures go against the evidence from the oldest copies – preferred in a period when a stemmatic theory of textual development was very much in its infancy, - as long as those emendations can be shown to accord with reason.

The most recent recension of *De Natura Deorum* was that produced by the Cambridge scholar John Davies (1679-1732) in his 1718 edition, a contribution sufficiently well-received to merit new editions in 1723, 1733, and 1744, with reprints continuing into the nineteenth century.[34] Davies' *variorum* edition integrated comments from numerous preceding editions, but was particularly notable for correcting the text with readings drawn from manuscript evidence, the first editor to correct the text with manuscripts since Gruterus in 1618, and the only one to do so before 1810.[35] The Translator consistently refers to Davies' edition, demonstrating an engagement with the most recent scholarship mirrored in the extensive use of Bouhier's comments on the text,

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[33] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, A^{v}.

[34] John Davies (ed.), *De Natura Deorum Libri Tres. Cum Notis Integris Paulli Manucii, Petri Victorii, Joachimi Camerarii, Dions. Lambini, et Fulv. Ursini. Recensuit, suisque animadversionibus illustravit ac emaculavit Joannes Davisius...accedunt emendationes CL. Joannis Walkeri* (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1718). Davies also produced editions of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1708), *De Divinatione* and *De Fato* (1721), *Academica* (1725), *De Legibus* (1727), and *De Finibus* (1728).

[35] Davies identifies these manuscripts as the *Codices Elienses* (lent from the library of John Moore, Bishop of Ely); *Codex Regius*; *Codex Meadianus*; *Codices Cantabrigienses*; *Codex Lincolniens*.

which had been included with d'Olivet's translation in 1721. More often than not, the Translator demonstrates a marked sympathy for Davies' edition, endorsing the readings selected in that text, and demonstrating a particularly positive reaction to Davies' conjectural emendations.[36] Moreover, the Translator engages much more extensively with the editions of Denys Lambin in 1566 and Paolo Manuzio in 1541, both editors with a tendency towards conjectural emendation, than with the 1618 Gruter edition, which was governed by much more conservative critical instincts.[37]

The evident sympathy for conjectural emendations and for the text produced by Davies is made all the more interesting by Davies' close association with Richard Bentley, to whom the edition of *De Natura Deorum* was dedicated, and from whom one of the manuscripts consulted was borrowed. Bentley's influence and legacy as a textual critic has been fundamentally shaped by his determination to elevate the reason, or *ingenium*, of the editor over the authority claimed by the received text and even manuscripts purely due to their apparent age (a sentiment which certainly echoed the Freethinking philosophy, even if Bentley composed the most significant rebuttal of Collins' *Discourse* in 1713). Bentley's edition of Horace in 1712, in which he famously called for the influence of reason before a hundred manuscripts, represented an intense level of intervention in the text, and a willingness – eagerness even – to employ the skills of the critic in emending the

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[36] See, for example, Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 94 on *DND*.2.20 (*vitia* to *convicia*); p. 88 on *DND*.2.11 (removal of suspected gloss); p. 119 on DND.2.64 (*saturaretur* for *saturetur*); p. 120 on DND.2.65 (*planiusque alio Loco idem* to *planius quam alio Loco idem*); p. 20 on *DND*.1.25 (maintaining *mundos* in the text).

[37] See, for example, Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 20 on *DND*.1.25 (Lambin conjecture); p. 53 on *DND*.1.85 (Manuzio conjecture); p. 66 on *DND*.1.106 (Lambin conjecture); p. 170 on *DND*.2.134 (Manuzio conjecture); p. 226 on *DND*.3.53 (Lambin emendation); p. 248 on *DND*.3.74 (Lambin emendation). On Lambin and Manuzio as editors sympathetic towards conjectural emendation, and Gruter as more conservative, see East, *Radicalization of Cicero*, pp. 89-120; Terence J. Hunt, *A Textual History of Cicero's Academici Libri* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 243-252; Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, trans. Glenn W. Most (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), pp. 45-57.

poet's words extensively.[38] The Translator's enthusiasm for editorial intervention based on *ingenium* is advertised throughout the notes, lending legitimacy to the Translator's own voice being so prominent in the text. The comments directed towards assessing textual variants thereby both advertised the Translator's own learning, and legitimised a methodology based on reason and intervention, creating authority for the Translator's voice which would be deployed in the interpretative stages of the commentary.

Critiquing Revelation

A foremost function of the Translator's voice in the commentary was to demonstrate to the reader that divine providence did not stand up to the challenge posed by rational criticism. This is made most apparent by the commentary to the second book of *De Natura Deorum*, in which Balbus presents the Stoic understanding of the gods; here the Translator explicitly instructs the reader to use reason to evaluate all so-called miracles, epiphanies, and examples of divine intervention. Reflecting, at the conclusion of the second book, on Balbus' assertion that divination could be interpreted as evidence for the divine's care for mankind, the Translator intercedes that "these, and some, which follow, are strange Arguments for the Proof of a Deity," before praising the Epicureans' disproving of "these Superstitions of the *Stoic*."[39] The note continues by rejecting the ability of the divine to overpower nature, reiterating a point which shapes the whole treatment of the Stoic's argument: "Nature is constant in her Operations, and God cannot favour one Man without Injustice to another; for Favour implies Partiality; where there is Favour there is

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[38] On Bentley's method as a textual critic see Kristine L. Haugen, *Richard Bentley: Poetry and Enlightenment* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 124-154; Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, pp. 58-74; Jospeh M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: history and literature in the Augustan age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 43-46. See *Q. Horatius Flaccus, ex recensione et cum notis atque emendationibus Richardi Bentleii* (Cambridge, 1711), p. 147, commenting on *ad Carm*.3.27.15.

[39] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 187, commenting on *DND*.2.163.

Attachment; God has none but to what is right. Weak Men often call that Favour, which is only Justice, and frequently impute to Divine Providence the regular Operations of Nature."[40] The refusal to accede to the idea that God could act beyond the realms of human reason and natural law was a fundamental tenet of the Freethinkers, and it is this critique of Stoic providence that most clearly situates this translation in that tradition.

In order to expose the falsity of the Stoic's claims, the Translator is not above applying modern knowledge of the universe to this account of ancient physics; it is for this reason that the Translator appends an "Enquiry into Astronomy and Anatomy of the Ancients." The incorporation of such an essay directly echoes the French translation by d'Olivet in 1721, which used an appended essay on pagan theology to 'correct' the omissions, or more dangerous portions, of the ancient text.[41] Here, the Translator applies the most recent scientific discoveries concerning the functions of nature to 'correct' those elements of the text which fail to adhere to those laws.[42] For example, in the course of presenting the Stoic view of the form of the universe, Balbus describes the movement of certain planets, so in the appended *Essay* the Translator introduces a modern confirmation of the science being presented: "When I consulted [Halley] on the Subject, that the Description of the Courses of the five Planets in *Tully's* second Book *of the* Nature *of the* Gods, there call'd the five wandering Stars, is agreeable to the latest astronomical Observations, excepting in one Particular, that is, *Hesperus*…"[43] Mistakes are also indicated, such as this correction to Balbus' suggestion that the planets sometimes stand still: "Philosophers agree that the Planets

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[40] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, pp. 187-188.

[41] See Kors, *Atheism in France*, p. 210.

[42] Sources consulted include: John Flamsteed's *Historia Coelestis Britannica* (1725); Edmond Halley's *Catalogus Stellarum Australium* (1679) and *A Synopsis of the Astronomy of Comets* (1705); David Gregory's *The Elements of Astronomy, Physical and Geometrical* (translated into English in 1715); and Jacques Bénigne Winslow's *An Anatomical Exposition of the Structure of the Human Body* (translated in 1733).

[43] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 271, referring to *DND*.2.52-53.

never stand still, but only seem sometimes to move faster, sometimes slower, from their elliptical Motion; and the Reason of their Motions in curve Lines is the Attraction of the Sun, or their Gravitations towards it…"[44] The purpose here is clearly not to criticise Cicero for not having a modern's understanding of astronomy, but to demonstrate to the reader the necessity of applying all available evidence to those claims for divine intervention which seem to supersede natural law. This text had, after all, been used in modern arguments concerning the nature of the divine, and consequently could be tested against modern knowledge.

In the notes' emphasis on the impossibility of divine intervention, not only is the Freethinking emphasis of the Translator affirmed, but also a probable motivation for the production of the translation in 1741. The relationship between the operations of nature and divine interruptions to those operations, notably in the form of prophecies and miracles, had been the focus of the most recent theological debates, as the efforts among the heterodox to discredit the evidence for Christian revelation continued. From 1738 to 1741, in particular, Thomas Chubb (1679-1747) and Thomas Morgan (d. 1743) had produced a series of works which attempted to reconcile natural law and divine providence.[45] Chubb's *True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted* (1738), *True Gospel of Jesus Christ Vindicated* (1739), and *Discourse on Miracles* (1741) advanced several crucial arguments concerning the miraculous, two of which were particularly significant. First, that while it was possible for God to act outside the ordinary course of nature, it was almost never necessary,

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[44] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 111, on *DND*.2.51.

[45] On this debate on miracles see Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, ""God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being": Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan on Miracles and Providence," in *Atheism and Deism Revalued: heterodox religious identities in Britain, 1650-1800*, eds Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, and Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 157-172; Diego Lucci and Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, ""God does not act arbitrarily, or interpose unnecessarily": providential deism and the denial of miracles in Wollaston, Tindal, Chubb, and Morgan," *Intellectual History Review* 25.2 (2015), pp. 167-189; Wayne Hudson, *Enlightenment and Modernity: the English deists and reform* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), pp. 27-104.

as God had created nature, and it was made perfect by his forethought; more likely, and demonstrated by Chubb's analysis of numerous miracles, was a natural explanation which could not be apprehended at the moment of the miracle. Second, and based on this general thesis, the effect of an event alone did not render it miraculous, but rather the cause must be known to be divine. Similarly Morgan, in the three volumes of his *Moral Philosopher* published in 1737, 1739, and 1741 respectively, argued that the laws of nature were essentially a description of God's providence, of the divine's perpetuation of the universe, and consequently they could not be circumvented.

There are notable echoes of these arguments in the Translator's commentary on *De Natura Deorum*. Cicero's attitude in both this work and in *De Divinatione* to the possibility of divine intervention against the evidence of reason became a crucial feature of debates concerning these texts between the Freethinkers and their critics. Collins, who was committed to a rational epistemology which dismissed the possibility of revelation above or beyond reason, claimed affiliation with Cicero on this point, arguing that in *De Natura Deorum* Cicero "endeavour'd to show the Weakness of all the Arguments of the *Stoicks* (who were the great *Theists* of Antiquity) for the Being of the Gods," while *De Divinatione* "destroy'd the whole Reveal'd Religion of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and show'd the Imposture of all their Miracles, and Weakness of the Reasons on which it pretended to be founded."[46] Richard Bentley's critique of Collins' understanding of Cicero's Scepticism made the opposite view possible, claiming that "when *Cicero* says above, that the Stoical Doctrine of Providence seem'd to him more PROBABLE: if we take it aright, it carries the same importance as when a *Stoic* says it's CERTAIN and DEMONSTRABLE."[47] This allowed orthodox writers to continue using *De Natura Deorum*, particularly the Stoic book, as part of their arguments

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[46] Collins, *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 135-136.

[47] Bentley, *Remarks*, 2.80, referring to *DND*.3.95.

in defence of revelation.[48] Even in 1741, Conyers Middleton felt compelled to assert several times in his *History* that Cicero "believed also in a divine Providence constantly presiding over the whole system, and extending its care to all the principal members of it, with a peculiar attention to the conduct and actions of men, but leaving the minute and inferior parts to the course of his general laws."[49] As a note to his reflection on Cicero's religious position, Middleton added that "from this general view of Cicero's religion, one cannot help but observing, that the most exalted state of human reason is so far from superseding the use, that it demonstrates the benefit of a more explicit revelation," before explaining the necessity of revelation for the guidance of those whose reason was insufficiently developed.[50]

The Translator's notes do not directly address this question of Cicero's possible belief in revelation. Instead, they use the commentary to instruct the reader in how to use rational inquiry, particularly an understanding of the functions of nature, to determine the validity of reports of miracles, prophecies, and divine communication, and to demonstrate their impossibility if they contradict nature. A lengthy comment on an example of divination provided by Balbus early in book two, concerning the augur Attus Navius's use of his staff to locate a missing pig, summarises the Translator's approach:

> Hence we see what little Credit ought to be paid to Facts said to be done out of the ordinary Course of Nature. These Miracles are well attested. They were recorded in the Annals of a great People, believed by many learned and otherwise sagacious Persons, and received as religious Truths by the Populace; but the Testimonies of antient Records, the Credulity of

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[48] For example, Thomas Bott, *An Answer to the Reverend Mr. Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses* (London: R. Manby, 1743), p. 22; Robert Leeke, *No Act of Religion acceptable to God, without Faith in Jesus Christ* (London, 1730), p. 36.

[49] Middleton, *History of the Life of Cicero*, p. 306.

[50] Middleton, *History of the Life of Cicero*, p. 310.

> some learned Men, and the implicit Faith of the Vulgar, can never prove That to have been, which is impossible in the Nature of Things ever to be.[51]

This comment reflects all the concerns of the debates addressing miracles which preceded the translation, not only refusing the possibility of an act which defied natural law, but in doing so separating cause and effect in the description of a miraculous act.

When Balbus moves from epiphanies to divination as evidence for the divine, the Translator is no less scornful of the Stoic's apparent faith in tradition and eye-witness accounts over the evidence of nature. Balbus relates the negative consequences of ignoring divine warnings, citing as examples the consuls of 249 BC Publius Claudius Pulcher and Junius Pullus.[52] Prior to the Battle of Drepana, Claudius had followed the usual protocol of releasing chickens on board the ship; these chickens refused to feed, indicating the negative view of the gods concerning his proposed actions, but instead of acknowledging this warning, Claudius ordered the chickens thrown from the ship and went into battle regardless. His subsequent defeat by Adherbal is cited by Balbus as evidence of the ramifications of ridiculing the gods' warnings. The Translator's comment emphasises the parallels between Balbus's criticism of Claudius' perceived mockery of the gods, and the tendency among his contemporaries to accuse those who query the validity of miracles of impiety, "for the weak and prejudiced Part of Mankind do not distinguish between speaking against God and against the Falsehoods told of God."[53] Such prejudice comes of allowing custom to dictate what should be believed, rather than reason. When the destruction of Claudius'

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[51] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 85, commenting on *DND*.2.9. See also Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, pp. 187-188, on *DND*.2.163, and p. 261, on *DND*.3.88. This is compared to David Hume, "Of Miracles," in *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (London: A.Millar, 1748), pp. 173-204, as discussed in Berman, "Hume and Collins on Miracles," pp. 150-154 . See also p. 82 on *DND*.2.6.

[52] *DND*.2.7.

[53] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 83, commenting on *DND*.2.7.

co-consul Junius's fleet is also ascribed to a disregard for the auspices, the Translator despairs that "Minds poison'd with Superstition are too ready to ascribe Effects to such Causes as could no more produce such Effects than they could make or unmake Worlds."[54] These attempts by Balbus to argue for the validity of divine providence are met with dogged resistance from the Translator, who situates any such circumventions of the natural order strictly within the sphere of superstition.

Defending Reason

The Translator's extended critique of Stoic providence in book two depends on one fundamental principle: reason is sufficient, is in fact the sole requirement, to determine truth. The claim in the preface, that not all the arguments in the text would "bear the Test of unprejudiced Reason," is demonstrated in the notes, in which the validity of the evidence brought by the interlocutors is tested against this fundamental criterion of truth, reason. The value of reason is articulated in the third book, when the Academic Cotta challenges the idea that reason was a gift from the gods, being as likely to cause vice as virtue, with the reflection that "in short, what Debauchery, what Avarice, what Crimes, amongst Men do not owe their Birth to Thought and Reflection, That is, to Reason? To right Reason, if their Thoughts are conformable to Truth; to bad Reason, if they are not."[55] This statement provoked the Translator to defend reason against the accusation that it could ever lead to an incorrect action, asserting that Cotta's understanding of reason was faulty, for "*Reason*, … is that Power of the Mind, by which we are able to range and compare Ideas, and to separate Right from Wrong."[56] When commenting on Cotta's response to the Epicurean

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[54] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p.84, commenting on *DND*.2.7. See also Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, pp.85-86, on *DND*.2.9 and the story of Attus Navius, and p. 90, commenting on *DND*.2.12.

[55] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 245, translating *DND*.3.71: "quae enim libido quae avaritia quod facinus aut suscipitur nisi consilio capto aut sine animi motu et cogitatione, id est ratione, perficitur? Nam omnis opinio ratio est, et quidem bona ratio si vera, mala autem si falsa est opinio."

[56] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 245, commenting on *DND*.3.71.

Velleius in book one, the Translator had explained this point, identifying reason as "a Motion of the Mind; but the first Motions of the Mind are not always reasonable; the Use of Reason therefore is to check the first Motions when leading to Evil, and to indulge them when leading to Good."[57] Reason, when followed correctly, could not possibly lead to vice or falsehood, as it was by its nature the mechanism by which right and wrong were identified. Reason as conceived by the Academic Sceptic was an incorrect representation of what it meant to reason, one which consequently the Translator had to correct.

This is also a feature of the Translator's comments on the lacuna in book three, a missing portion of text which would have contained Cotta's response to Balbus' arguments in favour of divine providence. Here again, the Translator felt compelled to confront Cotta's apparent doubts about the usefulness of reason, remarking that "as Reason is That, which leads the human Mind to Truth, that Motion of the Mind, which does not lead to Truth, cannot be call'd Reason, though there may be a Chain of Thought in it."[58] The Translator then reproduces in full the lengthy comment on the lacuna from d'Olivet's 1721 translation, which reflected on the arguments used by Cotta against Balbus, including this critique of human reason. D'Olivet concludes that Cotta was right to express hesitancy over the reliability of reason, for "our Reason by itself is commonly more ingenious at leading us into Snares, than drawing us out of them."[59] The Translator responded to d'Olivet's comment with a further defence of reason as fundamental to the discovery of religious truth: "the Reader will here observe that the learn'd Frenchman draws up his Conclusion with knocking Reason down, and letting up Scripture as the sole Rule of Faith and Conduct; but, as he Rejects Reason, he offers none for his great Rule."

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[57] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 65, commenting on DND.1.104.

[58] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 235.

[59] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 240.

By championing reason in this way, the Translator was invoking the principle central to the Freethinking tradition. This was a philosophy defined by its commitment to, in the words of its principal advocate, "endeavouring to find out the Meaning of any Proposition whatsoever, [by] considering the nature of the Evidence for or against it, and [by] judging of it according to the seeming Force or Weakness of the Evidence."[60] While 'Freethinker' might be used to encompass a variety of positions, a consistent feature of all those identified as such was the commitment to rational investigation based on evidence in opposition to the assumption of truth based on traditional authority, anecdote, and the assertion that some truths simply lie beyond the grasp of the human mind.[61] It was only by discovering knowledge in this way that true belief could be achieved. While this epistemological stance had from its beginning met with opposition from orthodox writers seeking to defend the existence of revelatory knowledge above or beyond reason, further challenges emerged in the 1730s from the opposing epistemologies of fideism and scepticism, offering further insight into the decision to publish the translation in 1741.[62] On the one hand, fideists such as William Law (1686-1761) and Joseph Butler (1692-1752) emerged, arguing that reason was inherently flawed and unnecessary for comprehending religious truth, and

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[60] Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, Occasion'd by The Rise and Growth of a Sect call'd Free-Thinkers* (London, 1713), p. 5.

[61] Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976), pp. 200-210; Lucci, "Deism, Freethinking and Toleration," pp. 345-347; Beiser, *Sovereignty of Reason*, pp. 257-258.

[62] On the threat posed to reason by scepticism and fideism in this period see Diego Lucci, "An Eighteenth-Century Skeptical Attack on Rational Theology and Positive Religion: 'Christianity not Founded on Argument' by Henry Dodwell the Younger," *Intellectual History Review* 23.4 (2013), pp. 453-478 (458-459); Sylian Malinowski-Charles, "Fideism, Scepticism, or Free-Thought? The dispute between Lamy and Saint-Laurens over Metaphysical Knowledge," in *Scepticism in the Eighteenth-Century: Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), pp. 31-43; Beiser, *Sovereignty of Reason*, p. 325. On the relationship between fideism and scepticism see Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xxi-xxii.

that knowledge could only be acquired through faith or revelation.[63] On the other hand, the fallibility of reason as a source of knowledge was being argued, most notably by David Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), creating space for a mitigated scepticism which denied the possibility of certain knowledge through rational evaluation.[64] The commitment to reason as the means of discerning truth, as evident in the 1741 translation, was a position which had been increasingly under attack from epistemologies denying the reliability of human reason.

This threat was evidently perceived by the Translator, who used the commentary to *De Natura Deorum* to not only defend reason, as we have seen, but also to attack those ideas of the ancient schools which facilitated doubt as to the attainability of knowledge through reason. Confronting Cicero's description of his philosophical position as an Academic Sceptic, given in his own voice in the opening passages of the first book, the Translator commented that "it was a prevailing Tenet of the Academics, that there is no certain Knowledge."[65] This absence of certainty was inherently problematic for the Translator, for whom reason could provide such truth. When Cicero explained that Academics considered that falsehoods were present in all truths to varying extents, the Translator responded "if our great Author had said *multis*, instead of *omnibus Veris*, he had been right; but all Truths are not blended with Falsehoods. The Relations, in which we stand to one another, as constituted into any particular Society, or as rational Creatures, and all moral

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[63] William Law, *The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated* (London, 1731); Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (Dublin, 1736).

[64] James A. Harris, *Hume: an intellectual biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 81-116; Donald C. Ainslie, *Hume's True Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Paul Stanistreet, *Hume's Scepticism and the Science of Human Nature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

[65] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 14, commenting on *DND*.1.17.; see also p. 94, on *DND*.2.20.

Truths, are as certain as arithmetical Truths; and if nothing but arithmetical Truths were certain, it is wrong to assert that all Truths are blended with Falsehoods."[66]

The rejection of certainty by the Academics is further confronted by the Translator through the assertion of the reliability of the senses, particularly in the notes to book one, when this epistemological premise was queried by both the Academic and Epicurean characters. The Epicurean doctrine of *prolepsis*, as depicted here by Cicero's Velleius, related knowledge to innate ideas, present in the mind prior to any sensory experience.[67] Belief in innate notions is dismissed by the Translator, who, citing John Locke, denies that ideas can be conveyed to the mind through any route except by the senses.[68] Shortly after, Velleius invokes innate notions as evidence for the human form of the gods, before claiming that reason confirms what innate notions show, to which the Translator responds that "[Epicurus] distinguishes it, but falsely, from Reason, as previous to all the Ideas, which are convey'd to the Mind thro' the Senses."[69] When, later in the first book, the Academic Cotta critiques this portion of Velleius' argument, the Translator supplements the point with the reflection that "if we exclude the Senses in the Search after the Deity, we shall be but Blanks in Nature. There is no Knowledge, but what comes through those Channels; and, tho' God is not the immediate Object of Sense, the *Senses* must guide us to what Knowledge we are capable of attaining concerning him."[70] In the second book, the Translator praises Balbus for rendering a similar refutation of the Academics' scepticism regarding the viability of evidence emanating from the senses.[71]

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[66] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 10, commenting on *DND*.1.12.

[67] *DND*.1.43.

[68] Cicero*, Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 30.

[69] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 32, commenting on *DND*.1.46.

[70] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 65, commenting on *DND*.1.105.

[71] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 179, commenting on *DND*.2.147.

It is therefore necessary for the Translator to pursue a reading of *De Natura Deorum* at odds with the key Freethinkers who had preceded this edition: Cotta, whose understanding of reason was flawed, who denied the reliability of sensations, and whose scepticism threatened the authority of reason, could not be identified with Cicero himself. Rather than identifying Cicero's 'true' voice with the Academic character, as had been the approach of previous Freethinkers, the Translator instead perpetuated the reading of *De Natura Deorum* which emphasised the Academic method, stating at the end of the second book that "as the Academics doubted every Thing, it was indifferent to them which Side of a Question they took," instead arguing each side of a question to determine which position was most probable.[72] The Translator's comment on the conclusion of the dialogue, the point at which Cicero himself returns to offer his view that Balbus' account had been most persuasive, confirms that the Translator intends the text to be read as an Academic exercise: "Cicero, who was an Academic, gives his Opinion, according to the Manner of the Academics; who look'd upon Probability, and a Resemblance of Truth, as the utmost they could arrive at."[73] Cicero, as was proper for an Academic, offered his view as to the most persuasive of the arguments presented, one which sympathised with the Stoic case, a case which the Translator takes care to expose as fundamentally flawed. The Translator, faced with threats to the Freethinking philosophy from all sides, in 1741 attempted to abandon the trope that Cotta's arguments in *De Natura Deorum* could be cited as favourable to heterodox positions, instead deeming the character's attitude to reason too problematic to endorse.

Conclusion

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[72] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 190, commenting on *DND*.2.168; see also p. 9, commenting on *DND*.1.11, p. 225, commenting on *DND*.3.53, and pp. 211-212, commenting on *DND*.3.36, in which Cicero's representation of different positions using these characters is employed to help determine a variant reading.

[73] Cicero, *Of the Nature of the Gods*, p. 268, commenting on *DND*.3.95.

The Translator of *De Natura Deorum* in 1741 sought primarily to convey to the reader a message centred on Freethinking principles: accept nothing as true based on authority, education, and anecdote, but rather evaluate it against the only reliable test of truth, namely reason. So determined was the Translator to defend this stance, to use the translation to frustrate the efforts of critics of reason and defenders of revelation, that they were willing to abandon the traditional Freethinkers' reading of the text, which endorsed the sceptical position of Cotta by identifying the character with the 'true' voice of Cicero. Cotta may have offered a critique of Stoic providence, but he also presented a problematic understanding of reason, one which failed to fully support the Freethinking philosophy. Cotta no longer served the interests of the Freethinkers, so the Translator used a translation of the text to strip Cotta of Cicero's authority, while simultaneously instructing the reader in the importance of the application of reason to all truth claims.

This translation proves unique amongst contemporary discussions of *De Natura Deorum* by seeming to dismiss the importance of Cicero himself in the dialogue; the location of his 'true' voice is not discussed, nor is it used to endorse a particular reading of the text. Such a reorientation of focus, partnered with a revised approach to the character of Cotta, was made possible by approaching the task in the form of a translation. As a Translator, it was possible to utilise all aspects of the edition – the preface, the appendix, the text, and the commentary – to shape the approach to the work, and to make that approach authoritative through the application of scholarship and learning. This was not an innovation, instead reflecting the culture of translation at work in the period; in fact, it is clear that the Translator was in large part motivated by similar translations in French, which also manipulated the translation of the text to endorse a particular interpretation of the text. The decision to pursue this transformation of *De Natura Deorum's* role in the Freethinking tradition in the form of a translation is therefore indicative of a broader trait of the classical tradition: it is in the transmission of the text that some of the most significant interpretative innovations of classical texts take place, reflecting the developments of the discourse, and consequently revealing a dialogue between scholarship and discourse too often overlooked.